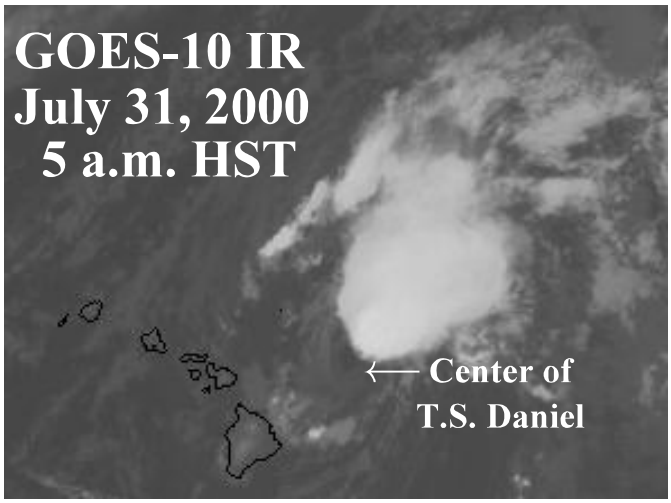
(Continued from front cover)
and soybean development. **Midwestern** weekly temperatures ranged from 2 to 6°F below normal. On the **Plains**, conditions ranged from cool (as much as 8°F below normal) and wet in east-central areas to hot (up to 8°F above normal) and dry in **Montana** and adjacent areas. On the **northern High Plains**, the hot, dry weather promoted winter wheat harvesting but accelerated drought-stressed small grains toward maturity. In the **West**, increasingly hot and continued mostly dry weather fostered the spread of numerous wildfires and increased irrigation requirements. Scattered thundershowers were confined to the **Four Corners region**, where the benefits of localized soil moisture improvements were offset by lightning-sparked blazes.

At the end of July, more than 50 wildfires were active from the **Rockies westward**, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Wildfires scorched approximately 3.5 million acres in the **United States** during the first 7 months of the year, more than 180 percent of the 10-year average. On July 31, large fires included a 77,000-acre complex near **Salmon, ID**, and blazes of more than 60,000 acres near **Wells, NV** and **Kernville, CA**. Extreme heat gripped much of the **West** throughout the week, intensifying across the **Intermountain region** late in the period. On Monday, **Thermal, CA** (117°F) posted a daily-record high, followed 3 days later by a high of 108°F in **Green River, UT**. Heat returned to the **northern High Plains** by Saturday, when highs soared to 100°F in **Billings, MT** and 99°F in **Helena, MT**. Dryness aggravated the effects of heat in the **West**, as seasonal showers remained unusually light. In **Nevada**, **Las Vegas'** streak without measurable precipitation reached 143 days (March 9 - July 29) through week's end, approaching their record of 150 days in 1959. **Las Vegas** also recorded a 140-day dry spell (September 23, 1999 - February 9, 2000) last autumn and winter, but netted 1.80 inches between February 10 and March 8.

In contrast, cool, often showery conditions prevailed from the **east-central Plains** and **Midwest** into the **East**. Daily-record lows were posted on 4 consecutive days (July 23-26) in **Paducah, KY** (61, 53, 56, and 57°F) and 3 consecutive days (July 24-26) in **Jackson, TN** (58, 56, and 57°F). **Washington, DC** noted only 1 day of 90-degree heat during July (91°F on July 10), compared with 22 days in July 1999. Temperatures again stayed below 90°F in the **Corn Belt**, leaving locations such as **Indianapolis, IN**, **Chicago, IL**, and **Springfield, IL** awaiting their first 90-degree heat of the year. **Springfield** never previously experienced a June-July period without a 90-degree day. Farther south, however, enough heat lingered in **Texas** to produce **Midland's** highest minimum temperature on record (83°F on July 26).

Some of the rain in the **Southeast** fell too intensely to optimize absorption, especially into drought-parched soils. For example, **Greenville-Spartanburg, SC** netted 2.74 inches of rain in just 90 minutes on July 28. In addition, the rains only slightly dented staggering long-term moisture deficits. In **northern Florida**, July rainfall of 2.34 inches (32 percent of normal) in **Pensacola** and 5.01 inches (57 percent) in **Tallahassee** left January-July deficits at 20.77 and 24.62 inches, respectively. In **Pensacola**, 22-month (October 1998 - July 2000) precipitation totaled 72.20 inches (65 percent of normal), or 39.59 inches below normal. Farther north, some thunderstorms were accompanied by severe weather, including a tornado that cut a 9-mile swath across **southwestern Minnesota** on July 25, briefly reaching F4 intensity (207 to 260 mph winds) in **Granite Falls**.

Very cool weather continued in **Alaska**, holding weekly temperatures as much as 10°F below normal. On the west coast, **Kotzebue** noted their first July snowfall since July 3, 1976, and had a high of 41°F on July 27. Relatively quiet weather prevailed in **Hawaii**, despite the approach of Tropical Storm Daniel (see satellite image below), bringing no drought relief in leeward areas.



Heavily sheared Tropical Storm Daniel makes its closest approach to Hawaii, passing about 125 miles northeast of Hilo.